

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: LUL #8543 – Installation of a 12’ buried irrigation pipeline.	Proposed Implementation Date: November - 2006
Proponent: Pondera County Canal and Reservoir Company, PO Box 245, Valier, MT 59486 Ph#279-3315	
Type and Purpose of Action: The applicant as applied for permission to install an intake structure and 12” underground irrigation pipeline. The buried pipeline will be used to convey canal company irrigation water across state land. The scope of this project includes abandoning an existing ditch and rerouting irrigation water into an underground pipeline. The project will create several environmental benefits including: eliminating erosion and head cutting along ditches and coulee’s, reduce saline seep problems in the area, and increase efficiency of irrigation water delivery.	
Location: Sec 16, T30N, R2W (See attached map)	County: Pondera

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.	DNRC Pondera County Conservation District Pondera County Canal and Reservoir Co Montana Salinity Control Association
2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:	None
3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:	Approve the LUL. No action. Do not approve the LUL.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS
	N = Not Present or No Impact will occur. Y = Impacts may occur (explain below)
4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compactible or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] Soils are suitable for pipeline installation. The majority of the pipeline will occur on classified agricultural land. The project will eliminate irrigation water delivery through surface means (ditches and coulees) and reduce soil erosion and saline seeps. All disturbed areas along the pipeline route will be reclaimed and returned to production. This project is expected to benefit soil quality and stability. No long term negative impacts on soils resources are expected.
5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] The proposed action will increase water quality and water quantity. Pondera Canal Company has necessary water rights to provide irrigation water.

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
6. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I airshed)? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] The proposed action will not impact air quality.
7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] The pipeline crosses approximately 300 feet of native rangeland. The remainder of the project is located on classified agricultural land. Native rangeland portions will be reclaimed and reseeded with native seed. Agricultural land is currently harvested and in stubble. Following installation, all disturbed areas will be returned to production.
8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] No long-term negative affects on existing wildlife species and/or wildlife habitat are expected.
9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Sensitive Species or Species of special concern? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] No threatened or endangered species are known to exist in this area.
10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	[N] A field inspection of the proposed pipeline route was completed on November 14, 2006. No cultural artifacts and/or cultural resources were found along the proposed pipeline route.
11. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] Pipeline will be buried. Not long term changes to the aesthetic character of the land will occur.
12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] The demand on environmental resources such as land, water, air, or energy will not be affected by the proposed action. There are no other projects in the area that will affect the proposed project.
13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of other private, state or federal current actions w/n the analysis area, or from future proposed state actions that are under MEPA review (scoping) or permitting review by any state agency w/n the analysis area?	[N] Currently, there are no other studies, plans, or projects associated with the proposed project area.

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION	
RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	[N] The proposed LUL will not affect human health or human safety in the area.
15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	[Y] The proposed pipeline will benefit state land by reduction soil erosion and saline seep areas. Paul and Jill Johnson's (JGL Farms) farm and ranch operations will benefit from this project. This action will positively impact agricultural activities within the area.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number. Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[Y] The proposed action will increase winter work for the Pondera Canal Company.
17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[Y] The proposed action will slightly increase local and State tax revenues.
18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] This project will not require additional governmental services.
19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	[N] The proposed action is in compliance with other State and County laws. No other management plans are in effect for the area.
20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] This state land tract is in a rural area and legally accessible to the public. The proposed action will not create conflict to other general recreational activities within the area.
21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] The proposed action will not change the human population distribution or the housing requirements in the area.
22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	[N] The proposed action will not alter the social structure of surrounding native communities.
23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	[N] The proposed action will not impact the cultural uniqueness and/or the cultural diversity of the area.
24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES: Is there a potential for other future uses for easement area other than for current management? Is future use hypothetical? What is the estimated return to the trust. Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[Y] The project is being funded from a Montana Association of Conservation District LEP grant in the amount of \$25,000. The school trust will receive a one time rental fee of \$250.00 for installation and easement fees in the future.

EA Checklist Prepared By: _____

Erik Eneboe

Conrad Unit Manager - CLO Date: October 26, 2006

Title

IV. FINDING	
25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:	Issue Land Use License to allow installation of the pipe line.
26. SIGN4IFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:	Significant impacts will not occur as a result of the proposed activity. The pipe line when installed will improve a situation that has caused impacts to the existing drainage and will consequently benefit the state land. There are no unique, fragile or critical habitats in the project area.
27. Need for Further Environmental Analysis: <input type="checkbox"/> EIS <input type="checkbox"/> More Detailed EA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Further Analysis	

Garry Williams	11/15/06
Signature	Date